



PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
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PAEAonline.org • 703-548-5538

March 20, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
H-222, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the Physician Assistant Education Association, representing the 250 accredited PA programs nationwide, which graduate over 10,000 new PAs each year, we are writing to request your assistance to ensure that PA programs have the capacity to continue providing high-quality training to students. As frontline care providers with generalist practitioner training, PAs are a critical component of our nation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the mobilization of the health workforce to combat COVID-19 has resulted in a significant reduction in clinical training opportunities for PA programs, thus threatening the pipeline of new PAs. In addition to reduced training opportunities, PA students have voiced significant concern regarding the ongoing availability of financial aid to address unexpected expenses. To ensure the safety of both practicing clinicians and PA students, address clinical site disruptions, and mitigate any adverse financial impact on PA students resulting from this crisis, we request the inclusion of the following priorities in any legislative proposal designed to address the COVID-19 pandemic:

Ensure a Sufficient Supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Providers and Students

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While a significant proportion of clinical rotations have been postponed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, some students have continued their planned rotations and may be exposed to patients diagnosed with COVID-19. PAEA is highly concerned about recent reports of shortages of personal protective equipment for both practicing clinicians and students and strongly urges that supplemental funding be provided to increase the supply of PPE for clinicians and students who may be exposed to coronavirus in clinical settings.

Increase Funding for High Priority Title VII Workforce Programs

As clinical training opportunities diminish as a result of practicing clinicians mobilizing to provide care to COVID-19 patients, it is critical that investments in existing programs designed to facilitate clinical rotations be increased to rapidly increase future capacity. To ensure that rotations are reestablished as quickly as possible, we support significant funding increases for the Primary Care Training and Enhancement, Area Health Education Center, and Mental and Substance Use Disorders Workforce Training Demonstration programs.

Institute Borrowing Parity for PA Students Under the Unsubsidized Stafford Loan Program

Under current law, PA students are restricted to significantly lower borrowing limits under the Federal Direct Unsubsidized Stafford Loan program than their peers in other health professions. To ensure that PA students are able to meet their unexpected financial needs in the event of delayed graduations, we request that borrowing limits of \$40,000 annually be applied to PA students under this program — as was included in H.R. 1685 with bipartisan support — and that other forms of federal institutional aid be made available to assist health professions students with unexpected expenses resulting from delayed clinical rotations.

As Congress continues developing its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, PAEA remains committed to the continued development of the high-quality workforce necessary to address future public health crises. We look forward to serving as a resource to you and your staff. Should you have any questions, please contact Director of Government Relations Tyler Smith at tsmith@PAEAonline.org or 703-667-4356.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Howard Straker".

Howard Straker, EdD, MPH, PA-C
President

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mary Jo Bondy".

Mary Jo Bondy, DHEd, MHS, PA-C
Chief Executive Officer